

1. (Amended) A method of forming a weakening area in an airbag cover having a support layer and a decorative layer over the support layer, comprising the steps of:

providing a cutting support that supports the airbag;

providing a cutter having a blade;

placing the airbag cover with the decorative layer facing down on the support; and

cutting a tear line of a predetermined pattern through the support layer and into the decorative layer with the cutter while controlling the depth of cut relative to the support to precisely control the residual thickness of the tear line and to prevent the cutter from penetrating through the decorative layer.

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Remarks

The Office Action dated September 17, 2002, has been thoroughly reviewed and the Examiner's comments carefully considered. Claim 1 has been amended as set forth above to include the features recited in original claim 6, and claim 6 has been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1-5, 7-9 and 15-16 are pending and are submitted for reconsideration.

Election/Restriction Requirement

Applicant acknowledges that the Examiner has made the election/restriction requirement final and has withdrawn claims 10-14 and 17-22 from further consideration as being drawn to a nonelected invention and a nonelected species.

35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejection

Claims 1-4, 7-8 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Canadian Patent Application No. 2,205,284 (Towler). The rejection should be withdrawn because the claimed invention is not disclosed, taught, or suggested by the cited reference.

Towler does not disclose, teach, or suggest "a cutter having a blade," as called for in amended claim 1. Towler makes no reference to the use of a cutting means other than a laser and contains no suggestion of blades. For example, Towler only discloses a scoring laser 52, which uses a specific laser power intensity level to remove a desired amount of material (Towler, page 7, line 29 to page 8, line 3), and a scoring laser 84, which cuts all material